



Free Library of Philadelphia | Board of Trustees Meeting
Friday, September 16, 2022 | 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. | Virtual

Attendance: A. Appulingam; J. Chizick-Agüero; J. Benoliel; P. Dembe; D. Generals; D. Gould; J. St. Geme; R. Heim; D. Moore; S. Simons; E. Tomlin;

Staff: K. Richards; D. Cottman; N. Hadi; D. Henderson; C. Patton; J. Pecora; S. Pollie; G. Sims; J. Wright

I. Call to Order and Chair’s Remarks – S. Simons

S. Simons called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. and welcomed the Board of Trustees. She stated the public meeting is being recorded and will be posted online per City Ordinance noting participation in the meeting constitutes consent thereto and posting online complies with 65 Pa. C.S. §§709(c.1), 712.1.

II. President and Director Remarks – K. Richards

Info Item: President and Director Report

K. Richards noted that he recently visited Charles Durham, Logan, Haverford, Frankford and Andorra and talked to staff about their successes and concerns. K. Richards also introduced Darren Cottman as the new Chief Operating Officer and Jennifer Maguire-Wright as the new Director of Performance Management, noting that the optimism is growing within the organization.

D. Moore congratulated K. Richards on the advancements made with connecting with the city and trying to stabilize five day service. D. Generals asked what needs to be done to achieve stable five day service. K. Richards remarked that the Library’s Human Resources department is working with the city’s Office of Human Resources to properly follow the civil service process as quickly as possible. D. Generals understands the challenges of staffing up and managing expectations.

E. Tomlin expressed concern about the relationship between the Library and the School District of Philadelphia and asked that K. Richards meet the Superintendent. K. Richards replied that the Library is working to rebuild the relationship between our organizations and that he is meeting with the Superintendent next week.

E. Tomlin inquired about donations to the library. S. Pollie added that contributions can be made via the website to the Free Library Fund. Donors can also make gifts to a specific library through the drop-down menu. E. Tomlin asked for a card with this information for outreach events and S. Pollie agreed to work on this request.

III. Action Item: Consent Agenda –

a. Minutes of the June 16, 2022 Board Meeting

S. Simons called for a motion to accept the consent agenda. The motion was made, seconded, and approved.

IV. Budget Briefing – N. Hadi

Info Item: FY23 Operating Budget

N. Hadi stated that the Library received \$8.7 million in class 100 for staffing. N. Hadi also reached out to consulting firms already working with the City, such as Robert Half, Urban Affairs Coalition and PHMCC, to staff with staffing for short-term contracts. \$675,000 in class 100 is dedicated to exempt staff to build the Director's team. \$750,000 is allocated for programming and \$718,000 is dedicated to DEI/training. \$2 million is earmarked for materials.

N. Hadi also added that she is working on getting an imprest account for the Library to play smaller vendors who are unable to contract with the City. K. Richards stated that this is a big deal since the Library hasn't seen programming funds on this level from the City in twenty years. J. Chizick-Agüero remarked that having funding for community based organizations is a great opportunity. K. Richards added that libraries select programming based on their community's needs/interests and having these funds available is important.

N. Hadi mentioned that the Library is gearing up for the target budget, where an ask of \$3.6 million will be requested for computer upgrades.

D. Generals asked if the library was holding a job fair to fill its vacancies. K. Richards remarked that hiring needs to take place in the Human Resources department to facilitate a job fair. A. Appulingam suggested attending conferences to learn from other libraries about hiring. K. Richards stated that the Library is looking at organizations and conferences and seeking to reimagine/restart this process.

V. Facilities Report – J. Pecora

Info Item: Info Item: Status Report

J. Pecora announced that \$4,150,000 is earmarked for discretionary library capital. K. Richards thanked J. Pecora and remarked that we need to work closely with the city on our capital needs. J. Pecora reported that the Department of Public Property is assisting with the Library's needs. A. Appulingam stated that the same budget with higher costs is not enough and asked if costs have increased. J. Pecora replied that a 7% increase in costs has been noted. P. Dembe added that capital funding has been a problem for years and that the Library needs a plan to educate City Council. J. Pecora shared that he made a presentation to Vanessa Garrett-Harley, the Deputy Mayor of the Office of Children and Families. P. Dembe suggested that the Library work with other city departments with old buildings to address similar needs. J. Pecora noted that the Library collaborated with Parks and Rec and received help from the Offices of Sustainability and the Energy Office.

J. Chizick-Agüero expressed concern about McPherson Square Library having biohazards potentially leeching through the walls. J. Pecora shared that CLIP, Parks and Rec and the Library were working together on this issue. They are working with the city. J. Pecora asked to strategize with Board Members.

E. Tomlin expressed concern about Greater Olney Library having cramped spaces and inquired about upgrading the downstairs area. E. Tomlin also asked for updated facilities reports to share with communities so they understand what's happening at their library. J. Pecora agreed and noted that Greater Olney needs a roof before any other work can commence.

E. Tomlin asked for an update on Wyoming Library's elevator. J. Pecora stated that the quote for the elevator was added to the capital budget and the \$130,000 cost needs to be approved before work begins.

VI. Hiring Status – D. Henderson
Info Item: Staffing Report

E. Tomlin inquired about the complicated application process for civil service and asked if this process can be expedited. D. Henderson responded that Civil Service is in effect and that Human Resources is working with the Office of Children and Families to promote opportunities. E. Tomlin recommended reaching out to cultural organizations to share hiring information.

D. Henderson provided a hiring summary of fiscal year 2022, stating that 84 people were hired, with 11 hired in the first and second quarter of FY22. Positions are currently in process to be filled to meet the needs of Neighborhood Library Services Division and Central Public Services Division (Library Supervisor 1, Library Assistant 2 and Administrative Librarian 1) and the Information Technology Department (Local Area Network Administrator).

VII. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) – G. Sims
Info Item: Quarterly Report

Community Conversations are ongoing and previous topics include *DEI Backlash*, *The Equity Dilemma*, *Microaggressions*. Participation averages 19-21 per session and two sessions are held per month.

G. Sims updated the Trustees on the activities of the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee, including their requests to review the exit interview process and policies on challenges to both materials and non-materials.

G. Sims shared that work has begun on an organizational chart and will be shared at the next meeting. In support of finding candidates for the Library's vacancies, the Library is seeking to participate in job fairs. It is difficult for the Library to host its own due to capacity. Also, G. Sims is in conversations with the Special Collections division to review the slate of upcoming exhibitions to ensure a broad and diverse presentations. Recently, the Volunteer Services Department held an accessibility tour with Liberty Resources to identify ADA and access concerns for patrons with disabilities.

The Library Assistant 1 posting will go live on the city's website on September 19.

VIII. Public Comment - J. Chizick-Agüero

J. Chizick-Agüero stated each speaker will have three minutes to speak on agenda topics and once time is up they will be informed and the next speaker will be called.

Linda Colwell-Smith, Interim Co-Chair of the Friends of the Free Library stated:

“Good morning. First off, Linda Colwell-Smith, I’m interim co-chair of the Friends of the Free Library and thank you for the opportunity to address the Board at the start of a new advocacy year. And I’m happy to report that we’ve already begun our planning, our advocacy campaign for the coming season. Going to be exciting and we’re looking forward to it. We’d like to welcome Dr. Walke to the Board. We look forward to working with her as well. And we’re...our efforts last year were so successful that it shows that strong community based advocacy works and we’re ready to step up again. We’re also very glad for the update on the Library’s job hiring efforts. We understand it’s a big...it’s a big lift, a lot of folks are going to come onboard and whatever we can do to help we will. But the big question that I’m hearing a lot lately from other branches is the guard situation. For example, in..at my home branch, Torresdale Branch, we’ve had since, well through 9/15, there have been 10 work days and we’ve only been open all day for 3 days and we’ve had partial openings for 5 and we were closed for 2. And a big problem was the guard. The hired guard did not show up. And I’m hearing this in other branches as well. I would ask that we look into this situation and see how we can improve it. We’re also interested in the building situation. Jim Pecora’s report was outstanding. We’re very concerned with McPherson and with the other branches. And we would love to work with the Board on getting the information on the facility, the situation of each facility, out to the neighborhoods and working to facilitate a dialogue between not on the folks who use our library branches, but you should reach out to the civic organizations and other community organizations as well. And, look, happy to work with the Board on any other issue because we are the voice of the community for the Free Library system and transparency communication is key. And I have one great announcement: I’m happy to say that 2023 marks the Friends of the Free Library’s 50th anniversary. And we’re very proud of our history and we’re looking forward to our future efforts. We’ll be making to plans to celebrate our half century of success and more information to come on that but there’s a party in our future. Thank you very much and it was a great meeting.”

IX. New Business – S. Simons

There was no new business brought forth by the Board.

X. Adjournment

S. Simons called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made, seconded, and approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:59 a.m.